

**WASHINGTON DC—House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (MD-5) spoke on the House Floor tonight during the second Special Order Hour of the night to discuss Sudan and the upcoming referendum on independence for Southern Sudan. Majority Leader Hoyer has long been engaged on this issue, and led a bipartisan Congressional Delegation to Sudan in 2007 to meet with Sudanese government and Government of Southern Sudan officials and legislators, UN officials working on the ground and nongovernmental organizations carrying out humanitarian work. Below are his remarks as prepared for delivery:**

"In fewer than four months, Southern Sudan will hold a referendum on independence, which was guaranteed by the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. The C.P.A. ended Africa's bloodiest civil war, a war which took almost 2 million lives and displaced 4 million—yet the risk of descending into war again seems all too real. "Now as on my Congressional delegation to Sudan three years ago, our focus remains the same: promoting peace, stability, and reconstruction across the whole of Sudan. This is not only our moral obligation, but an important national security goal, as well: we must work to ensure that Sudan does not become a safe haven for terrorists.

"Tonight we are here to send a message to all those who live in and care about Sudan. We support full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement; we support a timely, peaceful, free, and fair referendum on independence; and we support an end to the violence in Darfur. These are immense challenges, to be sure. But Sudan's central government has shown that it pays close attention to the international community's intentions and actions—which is why we must present a unified, comprehensive position in our response to both the ongoing violence in Darfur and the North-South conflict.

"I want to be absolutely clear: Darfur remains a priority for this Congress. We recognize that peacekeepers are struggling—and in many cases failing—to fulfill their civilian protection mandate and that humanitarian groups are swimming in red tape and facing daunting security challenges. President Obama and the international community must continue to push Khartoum on the issue of humanitarian access and independent human rights monitoring in the region. And, in the wake of what appears to be near collapse of the latest efforts in Doha, we must continue to strive for a viable peace process. Congress is watching; Congress will hold you accountable.

"Tonight, however, I want to focus my remarks on the need for full C.P.A. implementation, and, specifically, on ensuring that the referendum on Southern independence takes place on time and in a free, fair, and peaceful manner—and that the results are respected by Khartoum and the international community.

"With the referendum approaching on January 9, 2011, our own Secretary of State has said that we can hear the loud sound of a 'ticking time bomb'—the possibility of new bloodshed.

What can we do to prevent it? The U.S. has stepped up its diplomatic efforts in Southern Sudan, and is providing \$12 million for elections security, allowing the Government of Southern Sudan to establish 11 Joint Operations Centers in Juba and in the 10 states in collaboration with other partners.

"I also applaud President Obama for attending Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon's high-level meeting on Sudan this Friday, at the United Nations, in order to discuss what more the international community can do to ensure a fair and safe vote.

"My hope is that a powerful package of multilateral pressures and incentives will come out of this meeting and those that follow. I also support the Administration's efforts to prepare for January with former South African President Mbeki, who is leading the African Union's efforts in Sudan, as well as with international financial institutions and international development agencies.

"But more can and must be done: we must hurry to establish a formal mechanism to help get the North and South to agreement on all the outstanding issues. Such a mechanism must include buy-in from civil society, in an organized way. The C.P.A. is a positive model on this front. The international community, including our own Administration, must continue to remind those countries with a stake in the outcome—including Russia, Egypt, and especially China, that it is in their own best interests to advance peace and stability in Sudan. And we must support UN peacekeepers and urge them to do more to protect civilians. We cannot simply throw our hands up in complaint about a broken peacekeeping system—we must fix it.

"Finally, efforts in South Sudan must not be solely focused on the day of the referendum—but also on the day after. The international community must step up efforts to prevent Southern Sudan from becoming what the Economist called a 'pre-failed state.' We know the dangers that failed states pose to our own national security—and if we want to prevent the emergence of a new one, the international efforts on everything from road-building to literacy education to establishing a viable economy in one of the world's most under-developed areas deserve our support.

"But regardless of the steps we and the international community take, the decision to turn this vote into a foundation for peace—instead of one for further war—ultimately rests in Sudanese hands. And so, my message to Khartoum is this: step up. At the risk of sounding cynical: surprise us! This referendum is part of a peace agreement that you signed in 2005. Come to the table, work to advance this inevitable outcome peacefully, and don't lead your country back into war. The Administration has clearly communicated to you that there are both painful pressures and real incentives on the table. It is your choice—and rest assured that the United States and this Congress will hold you accountable.

"To the Government of Southern Sudan: the U.S. Congress is committed to the referendum and firmly believes that it is the best mechanism for you to express your right of self-determination. Alternative approaches will only renew the turmoil that the C.P.A. was designed to end—and will severely weaken the future of your people. We need you to step up as well. We need you to come to the table as a ready and willing partner, and we need you to devote resources, time and energy to finalizing an operational plan and budget, agreeing on voter registration criteria and procedures, and hiring and training registration workers. There is hard work in front of you—but the reward, in the form of your people's right to choose their own future, is precious.

"To the Obama Administration and the international community: thank you for your efforts to strengthen peace in Sudan—but keep them going. We will all have to work feverishly to ensure that the referendum is a success—but the consequences of failure should be more than ample motivation. Friday's high-level meeting at the United Nations must be a productive and serious one, and more conversations must follow. They must be focused on how the international community will work together to assist in the technical, logistical, and operational stages of the vote; to monitor and observe the process from start to finish; to guarantee implementation of the results; and to mediate in case of any disagreement. You have the Congress's full support in this.

"To the humanitarian community, especially the American-based NGOs working on the ground in Sudan: you represent the best of American selflessness and generosity. This Congress pledges to continue advocating for improved humanitarian access, so that you can continue to do your jobs and advance the goal for which you have put your safety and even your lives on the line: improving the daily lives of people living in one of the world's most war-torn regions.

"And finally, to the people of Sudan: we stand with you. You deserve far more than the bloodshed and death and dislocation that year after year have brought to you. You deserve what we all deserve: a chance to live your lives and raise your children in peace. And America will do everything in its power to ensure that January is the beginning of that chance—not its untimely end."